

Midrashim - Part I

THE PERIODIZATION OF THE ORAL LAW

ca. 150 B.C.E.–ca. 70 C.E.	Pharisees
ca. 50 B.C.E.–ca. 200 C.E.	Tannaim (note overlap)
ca. 200 C.E.–ca. 500 C.E.	Amoraim
ca. 500 C.E.–ca. 700 C.E.	Savoraim (Babylonia only)

TANNAITIC (HALAKHIC) MIDRASHIM

	<i>Type A</i> (Ishmael School)	<i>Type B</i> (Akiban School)
Exodus	<i>Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael</i>	<i>Mekhilta of Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai</i>
Leviticus		<i>Sifra</i>
Numbers	<i>Sifre on Numbers</i>	<i>Sifre Zuta</i>
Deuteronomy	<i>Midrash Tannaim</i>	<i>Sifre on Deuteronomy</i>

AMORAIC MIDRASHIM

(dates of compilation are all C.E.)

400–500	Genesis Rabbah Leviticus Rabbah Lamentations Rabbah Esther Rabbah, pt. I
500–640	Pesiqta De-Rav Kahana Song of Songs Rabbah Ruth Rabbah
640–900	Ecclesiastes Rabbah Deuteronomy Rabbah Pirque Rabbi Eliezer Tanna De-Ve Eliyahu
775–900	Tanḥuma Midrashim Exodus Rabbah, pt. II Numbers Rabbah, pt. II Pesiqta Rabbati

All charts and tables are taken from Lawrence H. Schiffman's *From Text to Tradition: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism*, Ktav Publishing House, 1991.

בראשית רבא

פרישה למ (א) ויאמר ה' אל אברם לך לך מארצך וגו'. ר' יצחק פתח (תנ"ס ע"ג) שמעי בת וראי והמי אינך ושכחי עמך ובית אביך. א"ר יצחק משל לאחד שהיה עובר ממקום למקום. וראה בירה אחת דולקת. אמר האמר שהבירה הזו בלא מנהיג. הציץ עליו בעל הבירה. א"ל אני הוא בעל הבירה. כך לפי שהיה אבינו אברהם אומר תאמר שהעולם הזה בלא מנהיג. הציץ עליו הקב"ה וא"ל אני הוא בעל העולם. (ע"ג) ויתאו המלך יפוך כי הוא אדוניך. ויתאו המלך יפוך ליפותיך בעולם. והשתהוי לו. הוי ויאמר ה' אל אברם:

- (1) *And God said to Avram: Go, you, from your land...*
- (2) R. Yitzhak opened: (Psalms 45:11) 'Listen, daughter, and see and turn your ear and forget your people and your father's house.'
- (3) R. Yitzhak said: This may be compared to one who was passing from place to place and saw a fortress (*birā*) illuminated/burning (*doleket*).²
- (4) He said, 'Will you say this fortress has no governor (*manbig*)?'
- (5) The master (*baal*) of the fortress peeped out (*hetsitz*) at him.
- (6) He said to him, 'I am the master of the fortress.'
- (7) Thus, because our father Avraham would say, 'Will you say this world has no governor?'
- (8) the Holy One Blessed be He peeped out at him and said to him, 'I am the Master of the world.'
- (9) (Psalms 45:12) 'And the king will desire your beauty' – to beautify you in the world;
- (10) 'because he is your master and bow to him,' that is, 'And God said to Avram....'

Methodological Approach to Studying Midrash:

1. Structure of Midrash
2. *Mashal* as Story
3. Isolating the Elements
4. Matching the Elements
5. Drawing Conclusions
6. Reading the Midrashic Commentary Back into the Text

The methodological approach to studying midrash employed in this study session are taken from Simi Peters's *Learning to Read Midrash*, Urim Publications, 2004.

Midrash Worksheet

1. Structure of Midrash

Please divide up the midrash into the following sections: (indicate by line#)

- (1) the דיבור המתחיל (opening quote)
- (2) the פתיחה (a verse cited as an introduction to the midrash)
- (3) the *mashal*
- (4) the *nimshal*
- (5) the the concluding verse from תהילים (Psalms) with commentary

2. *Mashal* as Story

Questions:

3. Isolating the Elements

and

4. Matching the Elements

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.

Midrash Worksheet

5. Drawing Conclusions

6. Reading the Midrashic Commentary Back into the Text